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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 002497

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL KDEM I2 TC

SUBJECT: POST VIEWS ON OUTREACH TO IRAQIS IN UAE

REF: A. STATE 99829

1B. ABU DHABI 2090

1C. ABU DHABI 1680

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHELE J. SISON, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) Summary: The Embassy has considered ways to accelerate engagement with Iraq's Sunni Arab community (ref A), and believes that there could be a role for the UAEG in using its good offices to bring together U.S. and ITG officials with influential Sunni leaders. Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed and Minister of State Hamdan bin Zayed are close to former IIG PM Iyad Allawi, a moderate Shia trusted by the UAEG leadership. UAE leaders have been vocal supporters of the Iraqi political process, and remain deeply concerned about the lack of Sunni participation. For these reasons, we believe they could be prevailed upon to host quiet trilateral discussions in coordination with Allawi et al. They might be less inclined to invest their political capital on Sunni Arab elder statesman and part-time Abu Dhabi resident Adnan Pachachi, whom they regard as having less clout in Iraq today. We do not know of any other Sunni Arab Iraqis resident in the UAE who could be encouraged to play a useful role in Iraqi politics. We will continue to monitor Iraqi visitors who may be using Dubai in particular as a business or meeting center in an effort to identify players with whom we might usefully engage. End Summary.

Allawi Friendship with Abu Dhabi Leadership Could Facilitate Dialogue

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12. (C) Former Iraqi interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi developed close relationships with the Abu Dhabi leadership, in particular with Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed and his brother, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed, during his frequent, largely unpublicized visits to the UAE. Both Sheikh Mohammed and Hamdan have told USG officials that they wished the moderate Allawi had succeeded in the elections. Sheikh Hamdan told Ambassador that he and Sheikh Mohammed regard Allawi as a friend. Sheikh Hamdan said that he had briefed Allawi on our Iraq policy, including our mutual desire to encourage the Sunni Arab community to participate peacefully in the political process (ref B). The Embassy believes the UAEG would be willing to use its good offices to facilitate communication between the USG, ITG and influential Sunnis. If such an approach were of interest, we would recommend that Baghdad work this with Allawi and ask him to pitch it to MbZ and HbZ to parallel a USG request to the Emiratis.

Iraqi Expatriates Rarely Play a Political Role

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13. (C) The UAE provides an economic and political safe haven for approximately 50,000 Iraqi nationals, including Shia's, Sunnis, and Kurds, some of whom moved here more than three decades ago in search of economic opportunities or to escape political persecution. The vast majority of Iraqi expatriates are professionals who strongly supported the war and the installation of a new democratic government. Most Iraqi expatriates appear content with their lifestyle in the UAE and are not looking to enter politics. Even the largest Iraqi organizations in the UAE (the Iraqi Business Councils in Abu Dhabi and in Dubai) serve as fora for business and investment dialogue, not politics. The business councils played a limited role as information clearinghouses for Iraqi expatriates before the January 2005 elections. (Note: Out-of-country voter turnout for the January 2005 Iraq elections in the UAE was 12,300, about 92 percent of total registered voters.)

14. (C) Among the few prominent Iraqi expatriates who have been politically active is Adnan Pachachi. Pachachi is widely respected in UAE political circles and among Iraqi expatriates, but he is not regarded as being sufficiently influential in today's Iraq, and is often dismissed as being part of a generation that no longer has a voice in Iraq's affairs. Given the UAE's preference for Allawi, we doubt the leadership here would invest their political capital in tripartite meetings with Pachachi and senior USG officials.

15. (C) Another prominent UAE resident Iraqi is Sunni cleric Ahmed Al Kubaysi, who has strongly opposed U.S. treatment of Iraqi Sunnis. Kubaysi has a popular religious show on Dubai TV and the support of Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who views him as a force for moderation. The Emiratis had originally promoted him to the USG in 2003, hopeful that he could help curb Iranian influence and serve as a moderating and unifying force for Iraqi Sunnis. The U.S. military transported him to Iraq shortly after the end of the Iraq war. However, in April 2003, he delivered an inflammatory sermon at the Abu Hanifa Mosque in Baghdad in which he insisted that "for Muslims, resistance is legitimate." Al Kubaysi departed Iraq soon thereafter. The UAEG has largely prevented him from voicing his political views in public since then. (Note: When asked by OCV organizers just before the elections about the Sunni boycott, Al Kubaysi said that while he opposed the process, he would not discourage people from participating in the vote.)

16. (C) The UAE also is home to a much smaller number of post-war transplants, many of whom were members of the Saddam regime. Most prominent among the ex-regime transplants are Saddam's last UN Ambassador, Mohammed Al Douri, and last Information Minister, Mohammed Al Sahaf, both of whom are Sunnis. Al Douri lives in Dubai and Al Sahaf lives in Abu Dhabi.

17. (U) We will continue to engage with our Iraqi expat community contacts in an effort to identify any regular Iraqi visitors to the UAE who might stop in Dubai for business but who might also engage in political activity with the local community.

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